



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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January 4, 2006

Instruction Memorandum No. AK 2006-013

Expires: 09/30/2007

To: All Employees

From: State Director

Subject: Clarify Policy on Non-Law Enforcement Firearms for the Field Season

This instruction memorandum is being issued to clarify policy on issuing and carrying firearms by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) personnel while on official duty.

The policy states that an employee may request an authorized firearm only when his/her duties require field activities where possible wild animal encounters present reasonable risk. In order to obtain an authorization to carry any firearm in the field, an employee must attend the Wild Animal Behavior/Firearms Safety Training and pass the required proficiency test for each type of firearm to be carried (reference BLM Manual H-1112-2, Section 17).

The employee must carry the card signed by the test administrator and the Field Manager, Branch Chief or Supervisor, certifying successful completion of the required annual training and certification. A letter of authorization to carry firearms signed by the State Director will be forwarded to the appropriate manager and a copy should be given to each certified individual. Only the State Director/Associate State Director has the delegated authority to approve an employee to carry either a Government-issued firearm or a personal firearm. Both firearm certification and authorization are required each year prior to the field season.

If a non-law enforcement employee believes there is reasonable risk of a wild animal encounter in remote locations, has completed the mandatory training and is authorized to carry a firearm, he/she may then request and carry a Government-issued shotgun or an approved personal firearm. The firearm should be available in an emergency but stored where it is not easily visible in order to avoid possible intimidation of a member of the public. In field situations where there is higher risk of dangerous wild animal encounter(s) and less potential public contact, an authorized employee may wear a firearm on his/her person.

We must be mindful of the potential for an employee to be mistaken for a law enforcement officer. A non-law enforcement employee is not authorized to carry a firearm in the field during normal resource management work situations where he/she is in contact with the public. Under no circumstances is it permissible to wear a personal firearm with a BLM uniform when contact with members of the public is planned. Only BLM law enforcement officials have this authority. In potentially sensitive public contact situations, an employee should request that a law enforcement officer accompany him/her.

This issue is extremely sensitive and subject to intense scrutiny by both the public and our Congressional delegation. Adherence to this policy, professional conduct, and use of common sense should alleviate any problems and avoid jeopardizing our ability to authorize employees to carry weapons in potentially dangerous bear country. Any violation of this policy is subject to the appropriate disciplinary action.

If you have any questions or need more information, call Ken Higgins, Alaska State Safety Manager, at 907-271-6370.

Signed
Colleen McCarthy
State Director, Acting

Authenticated
Maria Rivero-Folmar
Records Manager